

# **Horthy's Atrocities in the North of Transylvania**

(SEPTEMBER 1940 — OCTOBER 1944)



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All along its millenary history, the Rumanian people had to face, for many a times, the invading tendencies of alien powers, coveting the riches of its land and trying to submit it. Overwhelmed by external forces, the Rumanian people, was obliged in some historical periods, to carry the heavy yoke of foreign domination, a fact which forcefully barred the course of its historical development.

In spite of all hostile conditions, the Rumanian people unflinchingly continued its existence in its forefathers' hearth, and preserved its national being and ancestors' land, striving for the union of all Rumanians in one and a single state. The legitimate aspirations of the Rumanian people for unity and independence gained new valences in the 19th century, when the social, economic and political development of the Rumanian society necessarily, logically and objectively imposed, in 1859, the Union of Moldavia and Wallachia. These aspirations were fulfilled by the gaining of full state independence in 1877 and the completion of national unity following the decisions adopted at the assemblies of Chisinau, Cernauti and Alba Iulia in 1918 concerning the union of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania with the Motherland, territories which had been snatched away by the Hapsburg and Tsarist Empires during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The making of the Rumanian unitary national state achieved the national, social and economic framework for the speedier development of the country, for



the rallying of all energies and creative capacities of the Rumanian people.

The completion of state unity of the Rumanian people was recognized internationally as well, including Hungary's government, which declared in a telegram signed by Béla Kun, addressed to the Rumanian government: "In behalf of the Revolutionary-Magyar Government of the Councils I am honoured to let you know that we unreservedly recognize all the national territorial pretensions claimed by you."<sup>1</sup>

The Hungarian aristocracy never chimed in with the making of the Rumanian unitary national state, as it never did with the completion of other national states resulting from the decay of the multi-national empires. They attached all their hopes to the big revisionist powers, intensified their activity function of the latter's cooperation. After 1933, Horthy's governing circles, looked forward particularly to the Nazi Third Reich, which with a view to achieving its expansionist programme, resorted to submination and threatnings, to hate-mongering between various states and peoples, according to the principle *Divide et impera*.

The imperialist policy of world re-division and domination promoted by Nazi Germany led to the breaking of the Second World War. Concessions and giving in to Hitlerism, the lack of firmness and unity of the European states in front of Germany's aggressive policy allowed the countries promoting a policy of territorial revisions to unleash the Second World War, attacking and submitting in turn a great number of states. Under these circumstances, at the beginning of the war, Rumania found herself isolated internationally, a fact which made her dismemberment easier in the summer of 1940.

Under the concerted pressures exerted by Hitler's Germany, fascist Italy and Horthy's Hungary, and in extremely unfavourable external conditions, when the Rumanian people found itself alone in front of the aggressors, abandoned by all European states, Rumania was compelled to accept also the Vienna Diktat of August 30, 1940, under which the north-western part

<sup>1</sup> *A magyar munkásmozgalom történetének válogatott dokumentumai*, Vol. 6/a, Budapest, 1960, p. 355; "Dimineata" of May 5, 1919.

of the Rumanian territory (the northern part of Transylvania), covering an area of 43,492 sq.km., inhabited by a population of over 2.6 million people, Rumanians in their great majority, was torn off the country's body and given unto Horthy's Hungary.

The decision taken in Vienna, by the foreign ministers of Hitler's Germany and Fascist Italy, — a direct attack at the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the Rumanian state, roused the indignation of the entire people. In assemblies held all over Rumania's territory — in Cluj, Timisoara, Bucharest, Sibiu, Sebes-Alba, Cugir, Oradea, Sighisoara, Baia Mare, Jassy, Constanta, Turda, a.o. — the people's masses, the workers, the peasants, intellectuals, military men voiced their firm determination to defend with the force of arms the country's frontiers.

External concentric pressure, accompanied by massive concentration of military forces at Rumania's borders, determined the Rumanian leading political circles to accept, as a temporary solution, the Vienna decision. Subsequently, for four years — from September 1940 until October 1944 — a part of the Rumanian people's ancestors' land — the northern part of Transylvania — suffered the oppression of the occupation regime of the Hungarian fascists.

The snatching of the Northern part of Transylvania from the national territory interrupted, for a time, the normal development of the unitary economic, social and political life, separating from the homeland the Rumanian majority population in the regions occupied by Horthyists, which was submitted to a brutal and bloody régime of persecussions, aiming at the de-nationalisation and numerical reduction of the Rumanian population as well as of other non-Magyar nationalities in the respective territory.

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Horthy's regime, enthroned in the northern part of Transylvania brought about, together with the military laws, thousands of police soldiers, recruited according to well-defined principles and trained on purpose by Magyar authorities, chauvinistic instigation against the people's masses of non-Magyar and non-German natio-



nalities. Savage terror practiced by Horthyists caused particularly to the Rumanian majority population great sufferings.

The programme implemented by the Hungarian fascists in the occupied Rumanian territory, had been made public in a booklet entitled *Mercilessly*, edited and disseminated on order of Governor Horthy Miklos. This booklet, which had served the "education" of the police soldiers and their supporters in the paramilitary formations, described their conduct line in the following terms: "I shall eliminate each Rumanian crossing my way! (...) At night I shall set fire on the Rumanian villages. I shall cut to pieces the whole population with the blade of my sword. I shall poison the wells. I shall strangle the babies at their mothers' bosom (...) I shall be merciless. I shall have no pity for anybody. Be they children or mothers in waiting (...) Revenge! Without pity, bloody revenge!"<sup>1</sup>

All along the four years during which they dominated the north-western territory of Rumania, Horthy's occupation troops, together with the nationalist paramilitary organizations, like "Rongyos Garda" ("Ragmuffins Guard"), formed of white officers from Hungary, dressed in civil worn-out clothes), "Nemzetőrség" ("National Guard"), "Tűzharcosok" ("the Fire-line Fighters"), and others, committed thousands of murderings, maltreatings and devastations. There was hardly a locality left, in the Northern part of Transylvania with its inhabitants uninjured, in one way or another; all had to suffer every sort of brutality perpetrated by the Hungarian fascists. Most significant would be the testimony of a witness of those events, Szenczei László, who wrote: "The soldiers stuffed with fascists theories, once in the north of Transylvania, perpetrated hideous atrocities upon the poor inhabitants of the Rumanian villages."<sup>2</sup>

From the first days of the occupation, there were committed a great number of mass murderings. Thus, on September 9, 1940, Horthy's soldiers murdered a

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Traian Bunesco, *Lupta poporului roman împotriva dictaturii fascist de la Viena* (August 1940), Editura Politica, 1971, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> Szenczei László, *Magyar-román kérdés* (The Rumanian-Magyar Question), Budapest, 1946, p. 161.

number of 81 inhabitants of the village of Trasnea, Salaj County, and their homesteads were put to fire; during the night of 13/14 September 159 people, that is almost all the Rumanian inhabitants of the Ip village, Salaj County, were slaughtered, while between the villages of Pausa and Ciumara there were shot a number of 30 Rumanians; in the village of Muresenii de Cimpie there were exterminated during the night of 23/24 September 1940 ten members of the families of Priest Andrei Bujor, school-teacher Petri Gheorghe and of Mayor Vasilica Gurzau. Besides these collective murderings there were committed also numerous individual ones, all the victims being killed after having been savagely tortured. In only two years of Hungarian fascist occupation (September 1940—1942), there were killed without trial 991 Rumanians in the Rumanian territory occupied by Hungary. At the same time, during the same interval there were recorded 6,813 cases of serious ill-treatings and tortures.<sup>1</sup> There are quoted some cases of citizens found with the Rumanian tricolour flag upon them, who were nailed the national banner into their flesh.

The goal aimed by the Hungarian fascists with these beast-like measures was double: on the one hand, by the physical extermination of as many as possible Rumanians — according to the Programme formulated in the *Mercilessly* booklet — and by the torturing of the others to make them leave their native places and take refuge beyond the demarcation line, they tried to liquidate the Rumanian majority in the respective territories; on the other hand, they tried to frighten the population with these measures, in order to stifle from the very beginning any manifestation of resistance to the Horthy regime.

For the decrease of the number of the Rumanian population, the Horthy authorities resorted to mass expulsions beyond the demarcation line. During September and October 1940, there were expelled all the Rumanian inhabitants of the villages of Rosiori, Salard, Diosig, Salonta and Salacea (Bihar County), Lucaceni,

<sup>1</sup> Documentary report "Four Years of Magyar Domination in Northern Transylvania" presented by the Rumanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.



Ianculesti, Horia, Marna Noua, and Scarisoara (Salaj County), Chenci, Tiream, Piscolt, Lazuri, Pelesul Mare, Gelu and Baba Novac (Satu Mare County), Poiana Sărata and Valea Mare (Trei Scaune County) and others.

With this policy, the Horthyists intended to expell first of all the intellectuals, to deprive the Rumanian peasants of their leaders. So, on October 4, 1940 there were arrested nearly all the Rumanian intellectuals in the town of Oradea. After being tortured, they were loaded in freight waggons, which were sealed and sent to Rumania on October 5 via Curtici. The second day, another train arrived in Curtici, carrying Rumanian intellectuals from the Counties of Salaj and Somes and from the town of Cluj.

Until September 1, 1944, there were officially registered at the frontiers points 217,942 citizens expelled, or who were compelled to leave their homes and wealths in the northern part of Transylvania, overrun by the Horthyists and to take refuge beyond the demarcation line, in order to avoid the terrorist deeds of the Hungarian authorities.<sup>1</sup> This number is still greater if one were to add that of the refugees who did not pass through the control point and the central files — i.e., some 60,000 or 70,000 — so that the total number of refugees raised to about 280,000—290,000 citizens. Referring to the tragedy of the Rumanian population expelled from the Northern Transylvania by the Horthyist invaders, writer Méliusz József noted: "crowded in freight waggons, barbariously piled one upon another, starved with hunger, with their lips scorched by thirst, sick and feverish, they crossed the border at Arad /.../ They left their homes in no time, their cattle, land, and tools when the police soldier came to arrest them."<sup>1</sup>

Another way resorted to by the Hungarian fascists for depopulating the northern part of Transylvania of the Rumanian population was the conveyance of the Rumanians to forced labour in Germany, hoping that a great number of the latter would never return

<sup>1</sup> Méliusz József, *Sors és jelkép*, Cluj, 1946, p. 121.

to their ancestors' land. In four years of occupation there were sent to Germany over 20,000 Rumanians.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, they resorted to the imprisonment of a great number of Rumanians in concentration camps on the territory of Hungary, at Losonc and Püspökladány. Till the end of September 1940, there were imprisoned in the two concentration camps in Hungary 1,500 Romanians. As these camps were not large enough for the great number of Rumanians "black-listed" by the Hungarian authorities, there were organized new camps, on the territory of Transylvania, at Someseni and Floresti. About 650 Rumanians were imprisoned in the camp of Someseni as early as September 1940.

Numerous Rumanians were sent to forced labour detachments, being put to an extermination regime. In 1943, on the territory of Hungary (in Budapest, Miskolc) and in the northern part of Transylvania (Ciocirlan — Satu Mare, Marghita — Bihor, Dej), there functioned no less than 74 forced labour detachments, in which about 15,000 Rumanians were working. They were used at railway building, forestry exploitations, at sapper works, a.o. Their ranks were ploughed down by insufficient food, sickness and inhuman treatment to which they were put by those who were guarding them, who resorted even to firing their weapons to make them observe their orders. Referring to the life of the detainees in the forced labour detachments, the Kossuth Radio Station declared on December 5, 1942: "The labour camps are the shame of our army... People are treated there like common law criminals. During work they are watched by armed guards. They are beaten for the smallest negligence, hanged by their hands... Food is scanty, so that sickness and starvation are sweeping them off. But they are not hospitalized on principle. Some officers and non-commissioned officers, de-humanized, are playing the heroes on their account... There is an order of the army for the most severe treatment in the labour camps."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Documentary report "Four Years of Magyar Domination in Northern Transylvania", presented by the Rumanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Csátári Dániel, *Forgószeiben, Magyar-román viszony 1940—1945*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1969, p. 138.



Parallely with the terrorist measures aimed at determining part of the Rumanian population to leave their ancestors' hearths, the Horthy authorities promoted an economic policy by which they deliberately aimed to slacken the economic power of the Rumanians from all the social strata. To this end they resorted to various measures, going so far as depriving the Rumanians of their subsistence means.

Numerous Rumanian workers were dismissed from factories and plants. So, of the 1,680 Rumanian workers engaged at the Railway Workshops in Cluj on August 30, 1940, only 100 were left after a year: at the tobacco shops in Cluj the number of Rumanian workers sloped down in a year from 500 to 25; at "Dermata" in 1941 there were only 72 workers as against 700 Rumanian workers in 1940.<sup>1</sup>

Similar measures were taken also against Rumanian civil servants, who were dismissed, and supplanted by reliable persons, brought from Hungary, specially trained for the implementation of the de-nationalization policy, of forced Magyarization. A statistical account drawn at the request of the prefect of the Cluj County on October 12, 1941, reported that on that date there were only ten civil servants in the whole county, taken over from the former Rumanian administration. The new clerks of the Horthy régime, expressing their hate for the Rumanian population, were also looking in disdain at the natives of Magyar nationality. Significant in this sense are the accounts of a person of Magyar nationality from the Northern part of Transylvania, who, in a letter addressed to a member of the Horthy Government, showed: "Numerous protégés and decaying lords come among us are looking disdainfully at us, we are not good enough as Hungarians for them. Their arrogance, their lecturing upon us how to behave (...) are absolutely intolerable."<sup>2</sup>

Disastrous consequences were brought about by the policy of the Horthy occupants on the situation of the

<sup>1</sup> Documentary report "Four Years of Magyar Domination in Northern Transylvania", presented by the Rumanian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Tilkovszky Lóránt, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon (1938—1941)*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1967, p. 297.

Rumanian peasantry, as the Hungarian authorities proceeded to depriving them of the lands they had received under the 1921 Land Reform, and to giving the respective lands back to the Hungarian big landlords. The revision of the Land Reform, decided by the Hungarian Government in February 1941, affected a number of 1,369 communes of the total 1,921. Until October 1941 there were instituted proceedings against 17,000 Rumanian peasants, following which the latter were dispossessed of 3,858 acres. In some cases the Hungarian landlords, without appealing to courts of law, proceeded on their own will, to the mass expulsion of the peasants from the lands, the action being led by the minister of agriculture himself, Baron Bánffy Dániel. Similar measures were taken to give back to the Magyar aristocracy hundreds upon hundreds of acres of forestry land. The policy of forced expropriations, meant to bring back on the Rumanian territory under occupation, the anachronistic rules prior to the First World War, still in force in Hungary, was aggravated by the war tasks burdening on the shoulders of the masses, of the discriminatory dispositions and the taxes, that aimed systematically at ruining the Rumanian peasantry.

Unemployment and the insecure day by day life were fully playing havoc in the ranks of the Rumanian petty craftsmen and tradesmen. A big majority of them had their licences withdrawn; others had their taxes increased and they were imposed restrictions to goods distribution, aiming at their gradual elimination. The sequels of this policy appeared very soon: according to a statistical report drawn by the occupants at the beginning of 1943, on the territories of the Bihor, Satu Mare, Cluj, and Tirgu Mures counties, where the proportion of the Rumanian population was 51.9%, the percentage of craftsmen of Rumanian nationality was just 6.8%.

Other practices used by the Hungarian regime to strike the Rumanian population was the putting under dis-traint of the wealth of the refugees, the passing of the property rights in some cases over to the Hungarian Exchequer. Such was the case with the houses in Cluj, Baia Mare and Cavnic belonging to the Rumanian National Methane Gas Society. In Oradea, from the very first days of occupation, the military command of the



town transferred the property rights to the "Panonia" hotel, café and restaurant, as well as the soda water and vinegar factories to some reliable persons of the government of Budapest regime.

There were numerous cases of cancellation of the licences to Rumanian tobacconists, cinema-hall and other owners of such establishments, that were transferred to Magyar or German people. Due to such practices the small Jewish craftsmen and tradesmen also suffered alongside Rumanians.

The broad gamut of measures used by the Hungarian authorities to slacken the economic power of the Rumanian population included also measures directed against the Rumanian big capital holders. In this framework are the measures taken by the Hungarian Government under which the National Bank of Rumania was withdrawn its right to dispose of its wealth from the Northern part of Transylvania, which was transferred to the National Bank of Hungary, and the measures aiming at seizing the wealth of the 18 Rumanian banks functioning on the Northern Transylvania territory and the shares of the "Iris" Porcelain Factory of Cluj and of the Chemical Plant of Baia Mare owned by the Rumanians.<sup>1</sup>

The Rumanian population was totally deprived of political rights, being practically excluded from the political life of the country. Rumanians were forbidden to organize themselves into political parties. The setting up of the National Community of the Rumanians, led by Emil Hatieganu, was admitted not as a political party, but as a body including the whole "cultural, confessional, and economic activity, representing and supporting in front of the governing circles the Rumanian nationality," and its functioning had to take place on reciprocal bases, a similar mission being set up in the southern part of Transylvania for the Magyar population — much less numerous — which remained under Rumanian administration. As a matter of fact, even the National Community of the Rumanians was subjected to all sort of vexation by the occupants, its activity being often suspended.

The norms of representation in the Budapest Parliament, established by a law-decree, provided for an inferiority situation for the Rumanians, who, in spite of their forming the majority, had not the right to send more than 12 deputies, while the Magyars, much less numerous, had the right to send 48. Under various pretexts, the Horthy authorities did not respect even those reduced rights, the Rumanian deputies being never invited to participate in the sessions of the Hungarian Parliament. As a matter of fact, the Horthy Government, trusting neither the options of the Magyar population from the Northern part of Transylvania, did not allow it to freely elect its representatives, the latter being selected and nominated by the government, their great majority having no connection with the local population whatsoever.

Rumanians were also restricted their right of representation into the local administrative bodies, the county, district, municipal and communal councils, nominated by the minister of home affairs, at the proposition of the prefect, of the pretorium prefectum or the mayor. Although the majority of the population was formed of Rumanians, the number of their representatives in the respective councils was extremely reduced. Thus, in the Cluj County, of 120 counsellors, only 27 were Rumanians; in the Satu Mare County, of 210 counsellors, Rumanians were 18; in Salaj County among the 120 counsellors there were 17 Rumanians, while in the Mures County of 150 counsellors only 7 were Rumanians. Most telling for the way the Horthy authorities understood to ensure the representation of nationalities in the local administrative bodies are the data supplied by the Bistrita Nasaud County where at a population of 113,326 Rumanians, 20,827 Germans and 7,816 Hungarians, the County council was formed of 35 Rumanians, 23 Germans and 90 Hungarians. Even smaller was the number of Rumanian counsellors in municipal councils: in Satu Mare, of 54 counsellors, 1 was Rumanian; in Baia Mare, of 30 counsellors, 2 were Rumanians; in Baia Sprie of 24 counsellors, 1 was Rumanian; in Cluj only two counsellors were Rumanians.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Csátori Dániel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 140 and 244.

<sup>1</sup> "Tribuna Ardealului", of April 1, 9 and 23; "Saptamina" of May 11, 1941.



The same policy of oppression was carried by the Horthy invaders against the Rumanians in the cultural field. The right to use the mother tongue in school and state administration was reduced, the Horthy schooling policy re-editing, practically, the de-nationalization policy promoted under the old Austro-Hungarian administration, completed with fascist and racial methods. The number of elementary schools authorized to function with tuition in Rumanian — disproportioned from the very beginning as to the great share of the Rumanian population — marked a continuous sloping down in the four years of occupation, being supplanted by schools with tuition in Hungarian. As a justification for these measures they resorted to the Magyarization of the family names of the Rumanians.

Even more serious was the situation of high schools with tuition in Rumanian, which were reduced, as early as 1940/1941, to only 12 schooling units all over the entire region. Towns with Rumanian majority or with a numerous Rumanian population in the neighbourhoods, like Dej, Baia Mare, Sighetul Marmatiei, Zalau, Satu Mare, Tirgu Mures remained from the very beginning without high schools with tuition in Rumanian, to which were later added the towns of Bistrita and Oradea. The demands advanced by the Rumanians regarding the setting up of new high schools with tuition in Rumanian were systematically rejected by the Magyar authorities, under various pretexts.

Higher education in Rumanian, was represented practically, only by the two theological academies functioning besides the bishoprics of Cluj. The whole education at the University of Cluj was given in Magyar.

Rumanian churches were exposed to permanent vexation perpetrated by the occupationists, who did not hide their aim to bar the Rumanian churches become factors of preserving the Rumanian specific in the respective territories. The Greek-Catholic dioceses, subordinated to the Rumanian Bishopric of Oradea, were placed under the jurisdiction of the Magyar Greek-Catholic Bishopric of Hajdudorog. Rumanian was banned even in the religious service in the respective churches.

On February 21, 1941, the drum was beaten in the villages to announce that those who would not submit

themselves to this measure were to be expelled within 6 hours. The execution of church wealths, the profanation and destroyal of some churches, torture and murdering of some priests and their families belonged to the arsenal of methods used by Hungarian fascists to stifle the resistance in the ranks of the churches and of the Rumanian population in general.

The Rumanian press organs were prohibited, the only newspaper authorized being "Tribuna Ardealului", under the editorship of Emil Hatieganu, and other four periodicals. At the same time, there were banned all the Rumanian lay publishing houses and the cultural associations, as for instance: "Casina Romana" of Cluj, the Cultural Association of Nasaud, the Women's Association of Oradea.

Alongside of the Rumanians, who constituted the principal target of the chauvinistic, terrorist policy, promoted by the Horthy occupationists, great suffering was inflicted upon the Jewish population. After the occupation of Hungary by the Hitler troops in March 1944, the racial anti-Jewish measures were uninterrupted.

At the end of April 1944, Jews began to be convicted in ghettos, in Oradea alone, about 30,000 Jews being crowded in a reduced space. In the summer of 1944, the Gestapo and the Hungarian fascists began the deportation of the Jewish population from the Northern part of Transylvania to the Nazi extermination camps. Of the 148,288 Jews deported, over 100,000 were exterminated.

Horthy's terror was also savagely directed against the political forces in the occupied territory who stood against Hungary's entrance into the war. From the very first months of occupation, the police, the gendarmerie, the under-prefects of the counties were given the order to draw up, with the help of the counter-espionage organs, the list containing all the "subversive elements", the "instigators against war". Following June 27, 1941, when the Hungarian government declared war to the Soviet Union, the Horthy repressive organs organized, on the basis of investigations made and of information obtained, a broad action for the arrest of 1,210 persons — Rumanians, Magyars, Jews. They were sent to camps, where they were put to the tortures of Horthy Political



Police Department, that was narrowing the Gestapo in savagery.

With a view to intimidating the democratic forces fighting for independence, for national rights, at the beginning of 1943, a so-called "monstrous trial" was opened versus the anti-fascist fighters arrested in the summer of 1941. After having being tried in January-February 1943, the action was resumed in Budapest in front of a "special instance", against the first two groups of antifascists; for a greater "efficiency" of the terrorist action, the trial was held in several towns in the occupied territory: Cluj, Tirgu Mures, Satu Mare, Sighet.<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1943, the repressive organs of the occupants organized a new wave of arrests and imprisonments in concentration camps against the revolutionary, democratic and patriotic forces in the invaded towns and villages of Transylvania.

The crimes, murderings, deportations, imprisonments in camps, expulsions and other methods used by the Hungarian fascists could not stifle the resistance of the population in the Northern part of Transylvania, the growth of discontentment against the invaders.

Social and economic life in the Northern part of Transylvania during Horthy occupation was characterized by the deepening of the poverty in the villages, unemployment, inflation, growing profiteering. The population's living standards, including that of the Hungarians, registered striking lowering downs. Numerous enterprises, supplied with raw materials from the Southern parts of Transylvania or from the East or South of the Carpathians, had to close their gates throwing their labourers in the street. There was an evident shortage of indispensable goods — food, clothing, footwear — which, raised by force took the road to Hungary and Germany. A document printed in the autumn of 1940, read: "There is no sugar, no grease, no oil, and there will be no wood. There are taxes, high prices, and day after day new posters announcing what is prohibited. One can buy just half a kg. of flour, 250 gr. of grease. But to Hitler there are conveyed waggonfuls of wheat, thousands of swine, and sugar is taken from your own

children. You stay in darkness, without oil, petrol being necessary for the Hungarian tanks".

Referring to the situation in Cluj, Pavel Bojan, one of the leaders of the resistance movement of the Rumanians, said: "In a couple of weeks food vanished completely from the market. Bacon, grease, other food stuff and soap, carried in sacks to Horthy's Hungary, became in short time rarities"<sup>1</sup>.

Even Horthy authorities were obliged to note down in their reports the precarious situation of the population. "The problem of the supply to the population gives us great headache — informed the prefect of the Salaj County, on June 24, 1941. Private stocks in communes have been finished, there is no bread in communes... The general image concerning supply with grains on the territory of the county is greivous, desperate I should say"; in August, the same year, the prefect of the Satu Mare County drew the attention upon the fact that in rural localities the situation is outstandingly worsening, there are cases when 2 days on end the population was totally lacking bread and flour. Women and children hovered the streets in tears, in search of bread"; in November 1941, the police commissary of Gheorghieni informed that if until then the greatest discontent could be seen in the lower strata of the population, now, this spirit can be witnessed growingly in the ranks of the middle strata, particularly the state functionaries, or other people with fixed salaries".

Another cause of the growing discontent was the permanent increase of taxes, burdening first of all the working masses. "The population... is very depressed due to high taxes recently established — noted a report of July 1941 of the Command of the police of Gherla. Hungarians themselves admit that under the Rumanian regime they were paying lower taxes"<sup>2</sup>.

Hard enough was the situation of the population of Hungarian nationality who, lured by the demagogical propaganda or some other motifs, left their native lands crossing the demarcation line into the zone occupied by

<sup>1</sup> "Népszava" of January 20 and 30, February 12 and 13, and June 19, 1943.

<sup>1</sup> Pavel Bojan, *Vremurile mele*, Bucharest, 1971, pp. 256—257.

<sup>2</sup> Csatári Dániel, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.



Horthyists. Manifesting total lack of understanding for ensuring them the necessary subsistence means, the Council of Ministers of Hungary decided, on September 18, 1940, that "the refugees cannot be engaged, even if temporarily". Instead of the Eden promised by the Horthyist demagogical propaganda they were sent to concentration camps, opened in Cluj and Battonya; those who had relatives to give them the necessary subsistence means, were liberated; the others were sent to the concentration camp of Losonc and forced to work.

Horthy authorities adopted a discriminatory attitude vis-à-vis the Magyar refugees, giving them jobs, when there were, with lowest payment, or social position. There was an official point of view according to which they could be employed in the provinces alone, and in no case in management jobs.

Telling for their situation was the memorandum advanced in August 1941 by the teaching staff of Tirgu Mures, who wrote: "We are paying for all sins, as we are ruined, we sold our belongings, we haven't paid our rent for 4—5 months, we cannot cure the sick people in our family, as the salary [...] is not large enough to provide for our daily necessities. Our children can attend schools with their school-taxes due, but now we cannot send them to school, as we cannot afford buying them shoes, clothes, we have nothing at all. And we others, in rags, tormented, have the feeling of being exiled<sup>1</sup>.

All this demonstrated that the atmosphere of discontent against the Horthy occupants, existing from the very beginning in the ranks of the Rumanian population, began to get generalised in 1941, even among the Magyar masses, and those of other nationalities.



The Rumanian nation never got reconciled with the idea of permanentization of the Horthy occupation in the Northern part of Transylvania. Rumanians were consciencious of the necessity to fight for the restoration of the country's frontiers, for the liberation of the millions of people under foreign occupation.

In Northern Transylvania, the monstrous crimes to which a great number of people had fallen a prey, the tremendous sufferings could not subdue the Rumanians. On the contrary, they made even bigger the everlasting flame of the national awareness and of the sacred right over the land where they were born, strengthened the confidence of the Rumanians that by resisting in any way and by any means, in close union with the other exploited and oppressed nationalities, they will succeed to vanquish the occupation regime imposed by the Vienna Diktat of August 30, 1940, and to come back within the normal borders of their Motherland.

In spite of oppressions of all kind, of terrorism practiced by the Hungarian authorities, there developed an extremely diversified resistance movement, hardly to be faced. The National Community of the Rumanians takes council with the Rumanians, organizes the Rumanian resistance against the policy of Magyarization carried on by the authorities. As any official political activity was prohibited, they resorted to the organization of the forces within the cultural-religious and economic associations. High priests, guided by Bishop Iuliu Hossu, roamed through Rumanian villages, spoke to peasants, comforted them by explaining them that the foreign occupation could by no means continue for long. "Each visit determines a genuine fever among Rumanians" — noted a report of the Horthy authorities. With the aid of school-teachers there were created various artistic groups, choirs, theatrical groups, school cultural teams who played in Rumanian uplifting the national consciences in the occupied territories. There were set up cooperatives and credit organizations in Oradea, Simleu, Baia Mare, Bistrita, Zalau, a.o., aimed at supporting financially the Rumanians in order to resist the spoliating policy of the Horthy Government<sup>1</sup>.

A stimulating factor to the resistance of the Rumanian population in the territories occupied by Horthyists was the permanent contact with the Mothercountry by

<sup>1</sup> Csátári Dániel, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>1</sup> "Tribuna Ardealului" of March 22, July 8 and 18, 1942.



listening to the Bucharest Radio Station, by maintaining close links with some politicians like Iuliu Maniu, Ghita Popp, Dinu Bratianu, with the Rumanian Government, from which it received certain funds, destined to the help of the population, particularly cooperative movement, as well as by frequent and regular crossings beyond the demarcation line. In all the counties the authorities could see that the Rumanian population was confidently waiting for the "return of the near past", "laid great hopes in liberation", in "the restoration of Great Rumania". There are registered numerous cases when the Rumanian population refused to pay taxes, to perform the compulsory work required by the Horthy authorities, desert their obligations — military or labour — taking refuge in woods and crossing the demarcation line in Rumania.

The approach of the moment when the authors of the Vienna Diktat were to be vanquished increased the Rumanians' confidence in liberation. In May 1944, the Horthy authorities noted that "the Rumanian population in its great majority nurtures the hidden hope to unite with the Rumanians from the south of Transylvania... The hidden strivings of the Rumanians are evident". In 1944, the same authorities informed Budapest that the Rumanians "secretly tell that the North of Transylvania will be Rumanian land again... they are body and soul with their brethren from beyond the frontiers and they only await the moment when the Romanian dream will come true. Runaways over the frontiers are at the order of the day"<sup>1</sup>.

The determining event for the liberation of the Northern part of Transylvania from under the occupation of the Hungarian fascists was Rumania's joining, in August 1944, the United Nations Coalition.

The Rumanian and Hungarian patriots, in close co-operation, proceeded to ever broader actions.

Panicked, the Horthy and Hitler occupants resorted to new deeds of terrorism against the Rumanian population and the national minorities, as well as the military men of the Rumanian army.

<sup>2</sup> State Archives Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County Prefecture Fund 1944, No. 1373, Confidential Acts, File 1, Acta No. 194; No. 1371, File 2, Acta No. 84.

In the night of September 16/17, 1944, the Horthyists murdered in Sarmaş a number of 126 Jews, men, women and children. In the village of Moisei, Maramures County, there were murdered 29 peasants, gathered from various localities, who had supported the partisans or had tried to oppose the robbery made by the occupants. At the same time, they set the village on fire, 260 houses being destroyed in flames. The sole survivor Vasile Ivascu, lost his mind. Among those who laid their lives in this tragic event, which recalls similar tragedies in Oradour and Lidice, we quote :

Tomoioaga Stefan Slica, from the Moisei commune, who left 4 children, all still in life; Andreica Ioan Vivat, from the town of Viseul de Sus, the Viseul de Mijloc Quarter, who left 5 children; Bejan Petru, from Faragau commune, who left 6 children; Curticepean Vasile I, from the Faragau commune, who left one child. Sabau Ioan, from the commune of Faragau, who left 6 children; Curticepean Vasile II, from the commune of Faragau, who left 2 children; Blaga Toader, from the commune of Faragau who left 7 children; Pop Simion, from the Faragau commune, who left 5 children; Sabau Simion, from the Faragau commune, had no children; Boieru Mihai, from Voievodeni commune, who left 2 children; Radu Mihai I, who left 3 children; Pop Ioan, from the Voievodeni commune, who left 3 children; Radu Mihai II, from the Voievodeni commune, who left one child; Savina Vasile, from the Voievodeni commune, who left one child. With the same cruelty in the Sabisa commune, there were murdered 9 persons, in a labour detachment, as they had attempted to pass to the partisans, in the woods.

In the Banat, sub-units of the Wehrmacht murdered 10 people at Pasac, 17 at Periam, 12 at Biled, 8 at Jimbolia, a.o. At Gioroc, 13 Rumanian soldiers fallen prisoners were put to death and murdered by being shot in



their neck. In the locality of Alios, the Hungarian fascists executed 10 villagers and set fire to 32 homesteads.

With all the measures taken, the Horthyists were no longer able to turn history back. Owing to the heroic struggle of the Rumanian and Soviet soldiers, who found total support with the local population, till October 25, 1944, the entire territory of Transylvania was liberated from under foreign occupation. The Northern part of Transylvania re-entered the normal borders of the Rumanian state.







